

Stevens Thomson Mason to Andrew Jackson, April 27, 1798, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

STEVENS THOMSON MASON¹ TO JACKSON

¹ U. S. senator from Virginia. He was a member of the extreme Republican group, with Macon and Randolph, and the correspondence seems to show that Jackson trained with them during his short stay in Congress.

Philadelphia, April 27, 1798.

Dear Sir: Since you left us an Act authorising the Prest to procure 12 Vessels from 16 to 22 Guns and an act establishing a new Executive department to be denominated Dept of the Navy have passed Goodhue who introduced this last Bill is talked of as Secretary of the Navy (in direct violation of the constitution as I humbly conceive) a Bill authorising the Prest to provide ten Gallies and another to raise at any time he pleases within three years an army of 20,000 men with a numerous train of officers at their head a Commander with pay an [d]emoluments equivalent to what was formerly allowed to Genl Washington. the soldiers to be enlisted for three years also to accept of an unlimited Number of Volunteers subject to be called on at any time within 2 years after they shall offer their ser[v]ices and be accepted, thus under the pretext that it *may* be necessary to raise a standing force before the next meeting of Congress, a power is given to the Prest for three years, (tho' Congress will be at least three times in Session during that period) to raise an army to any amount or for any purpose he thinks proper, and that, however averse a future Congress may be to pursuing this measure they cannot prevent or controul it so long as more than one third of either House shall support him in it. this appears to me one of the most dangerous attempts to transfer the Legislative powers of the Constitution to the President

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and to establish a military Government that can be conceived, and I really fear it will pass the other House, so ready do our Countrymen seem “to court the Yoke and bow the neck to Caesar”. a Committee of the Senate are appointed to bring in an Allien Bill, by which I understand it is intended to give the Prest an absolute power according to his discretion, his caprice or his resentment, any Foreigner he pleases.

A Sedition Bill is also intended to authorise the same omnipotent person to muzzle or silence such presses as he pleases, probably to controul and regulate meetings of the people, and perhaps to banish such political Infidels as you and myself. for such is the intollerance of J A and his Party, and so favorable to their views do they consider the present state of things, that there is no calculating how far they will go to attain their favorite object of crushing in this Country the Spirit and principles of Republicanism.

late dispatches have been recd from our Envoys at Paris but men in the confidence of the Cabinet say they are only duplicates of those formerly communicated. I own that I at least doubt this statement. various private accounts lead to a belief that our Commissioners are at this time received and proceeding in their negotiation. it is greatly to be wished that they may accomodate our differences and conclude a treaty, before their puerile correspondence gets back to France. I shall be happy to hear from you respecting the politics of your State. And to be informed of your i[n]dividual prosperity and happiness will always give pleasure to2

2 The signature follows.